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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

GRAINING.

FIRST ARTICLE.

GRAINING is the imitation, strictly speaking, of woods, although the term "grainer" is often used in a general sense to signify a painter of marbles as well as woods. Graining commends itself by its durability. Our forefathers used real oak, but its cost, both in the material and in working, has caused it to be abandoned for ordinary purposes. Pine and other soft woods, now substituted for it, requires painting, or it soon has a dirty appearance; besides, as a rule, it has very little beauty in the grain, and few persons would care to have their doors and skirtings left as they come from the carpenter's hands. Flat tints, where the colors are tastefully chosen, have a good effect; but there is a whole range of transparent colors equally pleasing to the eye, and it is to render these that graining steps in. Delicate flat tints soon show the effects of wear, and are not by any means improved by soap and water; they are not, therefore, suitable for rooms in constant use.

We propose to give a list of the woods mostly imitated in graining, with a few remarks on each.

OAK.

Wainscoat oak is more generally painted than any other wood.

The work has first to be prepared with a ground, which must be varied to suit the intended color of the graining when finished. For light oak, nothing is better than yellow ochre and white lead. For darker kinds, the proportion of ochre to the white must be increased, and a little Venetian red may be added. Very dark old oak should be done on a deep orange ground.

In general, it is no part of the grainer's duty to prepare his ground, except to give directions for the final coat. Ordinary house painters do the rest. New work should have, at least, four coats of paint, and a person in building a house will do well, after the second or third coat, to let it remain twelve months before finishing, as the wood is pretty sure to shrink, and leave ugly looking gaps at the joints. Old work should be rubbed down, so as to get a smooth surface; otherwise the grainer would not be able to make what he would call "a good job."

The ground having been finished, and allowed to get thoroughly dry and hard, the grainer has to commence operations. Various colors are open to his choice, the essential point being that they shall be transparent or semi-transparent colors. Burnt umber answers very well, or for very pale oak, raw umber, and to these may be added a little burnt, or raw sienna, according to the fancy of the grainer, or the tint he wishes to get.

In the early days of graining, distemper, or water color, was used for oak graining; but this has long been discarded. The process adopted seems to have been as follows: Color ground in beer was spread evenly over the work, and then "flogged" with a dusting brush. It is not very easy to explain the operation of flogging, although it is very simple. We can best describe it by saying that the dust instead of being "dabbed" against the graining color, is held at an acute angle to the surface, so that the hairs strike in the direction of the grain, and by this means a very tolerable imitation has been achieved. The veins were taken out with a hog's hair brush dipped in spirits of salts. Another plan much in use a few years ago, but seldom practised now, was called by grainers the "presto" system. According to this method the color is ground in turpentine, and a sufficient quantity of japaners' gold size added to bind it. Some whitening is also used to make it "stand up" to the comb. As this mixture dries very quickly, it is necessary to rub in and comb a panel at a time. When sufficiently dry not to smear, the veins are formed with a hog hair brush dipped in turpentine, or better still, a little of the graining color thinned down and wiped down with an old silk handkerchief.

The presto system is very useful where work is required to be done out of hand, as it may be varnished almost immediately. In exposed situations too, such as shop fronts in crowded thoroughfares, where the work is in imminent

danger from passers by, it will be found convenient. Oak graining is, however, usually done in oil. Color ground stiff in linseed oil, should be thinned down with boiled oil and turpentine. A drier of some kind must be used. Sugar of lead is as good as any. It will also be necessary to add some melted bees wax or whitening to give a certain consistency to the color; otherwise, when combed, it will run together, and have a blurred appearance. There is considerable art in getting the mixture to work well. Practice and experience is necessary.

Having laid the graining color on as evenly as possible with a brush, always drawing your brush the last time in the direction of the grain, the next operation is combing.

Combs are made of various materials. Gutta percha, leather, horn, ivory and steel. The latter are most generally used, but for producing a broad, coarse grain, gutta percha or leather are very useful. Steel combs are sold in cases containing a set of various sizes and degrees of fineness.

Leather combs are made of stout leather, cut by machinery. The teeth vary from four to ten to the inch.

The grainer having combed his work, will then proceed to "wipe out" his veins. For this purpose he covers his thumb nail with a piece of soft rag, and takes off the graining color down to the surface of the ground.

Some grainers use a thumb piece or veining horn, instead of the thumb nail.

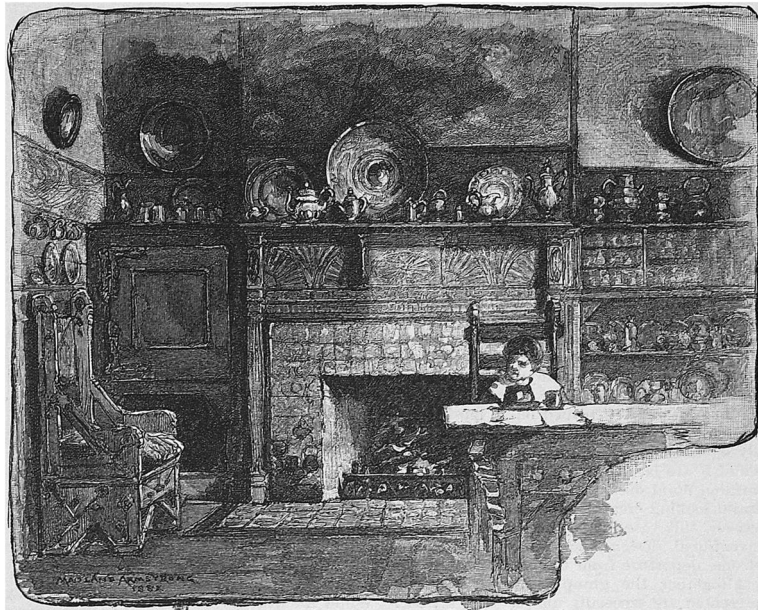
Of course this is the principal part of the art of oak graining, the rest is to a great extent mechanical; but a grainer, to produce a good effect, should thoroughly understand the forms and disposition of the veins in real oak. These vary, it is true, infinitely, but there is a general character throughout, which it should be the study of the grainer to acquire.

When dry, the work should be overgrained. For this purpose, color ground in beer is very commonly used, but many prefer oil color thinned down with turpentine as more expeditious. Overgraining is intended to give those streaked and clouded appearances that are found in the real wood, and also to produce a general softness and transparency. For distemper, Vandyke brown is a good color, but it dries badly in oil. The tools used in this process are a hog hair overgrainer, a mottler of the same material, and a badger. For overgraining in oil, a good flat hog hair brush, such as artists use, will be found to answer every purpose.

The graining now finished, and thoroughly dry, must be varnished.

[Next month we will give directions for graining in imitation of other woods.—ED.]

TO NICKEL SHEET IRON.—In Westphalia thin sheet iron is plated with alloys of nickel of cobalt and manganese. A half of one per cent of manganese makes cobalt and nickel very malleable, fluid when melted, and ductile. The plates which are said to be already in the market are beautifully white and brilliant.



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